

(Milwaukee, WI)— Last Saturday, Congresswoman Gwen Moore hosted a community forum, entitled “A Dialogue about Ex-offender and Incarceration Issues,” to discuss issues faced by incarcerated citizens, as well as how best to promote successful re-entry into society in order to give ex-offenders the best chance to stay out of the prison system. Congressman Danny Davis (IL-07), sponsor of H.R. 1704, The Second Chance Act, and H.R. 3072, a bill to reestablish the U.S. Parole Commission, joined Moore as a special guest.

Topics covered at the forum included re-entry and job programs for ex-offenders, treatment and education versus incarceration, racial disparity in sentencing, and new policies that could help reduce incarceration rates for both adults and youth. Kit Murphy McNally, Executive Director of the Benedict Center, served as moderator for the town hall meeting, which was attended by over 100 community members.

“The number of Americans behind bars has skyrocketed in recent decades, as our country locks up more and more first-time offenders for non-violent crimes,” said Congresswoman Moore. “The fact is, 95 percent of those in our over-burdened prison system will return to the community, with little to no assistance in terms of transitional housing, vocational and educational programs, or drug treatment. If we want to reduce recidivism, we need to confront these issues, and Congressman Davis’ Second Chance Act is a step in the right direction.”

The Second Chance Act (H.R. 1704) amends the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to reauthorize, rewrite, and expand adult and juvenile offender re-entry demonstration projects. These projects would, among other things, provide structured post-release housing and transitional housing, facilitate specified collaboration to promote the employment of people released from prison and jail, and support children of incarcerated parents.

Congresswoman Moore is also a cosponsor of H.R. 662, the Second Chance for Ex-Offenders Act; H.R. 2456, the Crack Cocaine Equitable Sentencing Act; H.R. 3072, To Revive the System of Parole for Federal Prisoners; H.R. 663, the Ex-Offenders Voting Rights Act; and H.R. 4202 Re-Entry Enhancement Act.

Wisconsin has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country, with more people of color in prison than any other state in the nation. The average African American person in Wisconsin is 11.6 times more likely to be incarcerated than a white person. In fact, for every nine black men

living in Wisconsin, one is in prison and another one is on probation. Currently, women are the fastest growing portion of the prison population, particularly African American and Hispanic women.

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